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Multicultural services in Canadian public libraries

Immigration has been an important factor in the development and growth of Canada. Since 1867, nearly 15 million people from around the world have settled in Canadian communities. Whether seeking freedom from oppression, desiring better economic opportunities, or reuniting with family members, immigrants continue to come to Canada to improve their lives, raise their children and fulfill their dreams.

So what are Canadian public libraries doing to respond to the rich diversity of the Canadian population? This article seeks to highlight a number of public libraries across the country that are working to ensure that the needs of multicultural groups are being addressed, and helping new Canadians to adjust to life in a new country.

Multikulturelle Bibliotheksarbeit in kanadischen Öffentlichen Bibliotheken

Die Einwanderung war ein wichtiger Faktor in der Entwicklung und im Wachstum Kanadas. Seit 1867 haben sich nahezu 15 Millionen Menschen aus aller Welt in kanadischen Gemeinden angesiedelt. Ob sie Freiheit von der Unterdrückung, bessere wirtschaftliche Bedingungen oder die Wiedervereinigung mit Familienmitgliedern suchen, Einwanderer kommen weiterhin nach Kanada, um ihre Lebenssituation zu verbessern, ihre Kinder hier aufzuziehen und ihre Träume zu verwirklichen.

Was unternehmen die kanadischen Öffentlichen Bibliotheken, um auf diese reiche Mannigfaltigkeit der kanadischen Bevölkerung zu reagieren? Der Beitrag versucht eine Anzahl von Öffentlichen Bibliotheken aus dem ganzen Land herauszustellen, die an der Gewährleistung der Bedürfnisse von multikulturellen Gruppen arbeiten und den neuen Kanadiern helfen, ihr Leben in einem neuen Land anzupassen.

Services multiculturels dans les bibliothèques publiques du Canada

L'immigration a été un facteur important dans le développement et la croissance du Canada. Depuis 1867, à peu près 15 millions de gens du monde entier se sont établis dans des communautés canadiennes. S'ils cherchent la liberté d'oppression, désirent des opportunités économiques meilleures, ou la réunion avec des membres de la famille, des immigrants continuent de venir au Canada afin d'améliorer leur vie, d'élever leurs enfants et de réaliser leurs rêves.

Qu'est-ce que les bibliothèques publiques du Canada ont entrepris pour répondre à cette riche diversité de la population canadienne? L'article cherche à tirer la vue sur un nombre de bibliothèques publiques à travers le pays travaillant à assurer que les besoins de groupes multiculturels sont pris en compte et servent ainsi les nouveaux canadiens à s'arranger au nouveau pays.

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1. Surrey Public Library

Surrey is located in the province of British Columbia on Canada's west coast, 40 kilometres southeast of the city of Vancouver.

Surrey Public Library (SPL) began as a series of individual branches of the Fraser Valley Regional Library, until voting to become its own library system in 1983. Since that time, the system has grown to become the second largest urban library in BC with a network of nine branches across the city.

Surrey continues on a growth trend, with city officials estimating that the population will reach 460,000 by 2010. Much of Surrey's population growth, according to the Surrey Public Library's 2008-2010 Strategic Plan, was the result of immigration rather than birth rates, as is generally the case across Canada.

The largest language groups in the Surrey area, according to the 2006 Canadian Census, include Punjabi (72,000 speakers), Hindi (11,000 speakers) Tagalog (9,860 speakers) Korean (7,185 speakers) and Chinese (6,025 speakers).

Multicultural services librarian Ravi Basi notes that successful service to multicultural groups at SPL starts with staff commitment, observing that "multicultural services is identified as a priority in SPL's strategic plan, and is more than just theory." All Library staff, from front-line circulation clerks to management, administration and the Library Board, participates in cross-cultural communication workshops which are taught by Basi and several other staff members. Basi notes that "it is crucial that staff is aware of our library's focus on multicultural services, that they understand why it's important to improve cross-cultural communication. It's important to equip staff with the skills, knowledge and confidence necessary to serve a culturally diverse and growing population and to respond to changing demographics."

Basi also notes that it is also especially helpful that SPL has staff representing the predominant language groups in the Surrey community. Basi herself is a Punjabi speaker, and SPL also has a Chinese-speaking librarian who has responsibility for outreach in the Chinese community. She believes that "we are treated with far more credibility from these communities than someone who does not have the same cultural and language background."

Basi is a member of several multicultural committees in the Surrey area, which allows her to make referrals to other services when the library cannot meet certain needs of the multicultural customers. This involvement in the community then allows her to promote SPL services to other service agencies and their clients as well.

As a result, SPL is able to offer programming that is tailored to the needs of individual groups in their communities. Programs in the Chinese language that deal with income tax, scholarships, and senior's benefits have been very successful, while programs that celebrate festivals such as Diwali (Festival of Lights) or Vaisakhi (the Sikh New Year) are most popular with the South Asian population. Some programming is universally popular and this includes Internet training in other languages. Basi observes that "it is important to know the needs and priorities of each ethnic community rather than making assumptions about them and treating them all the same."

In addition to specially tailored programming, a portion of the SPL website, located on the web at <www.spl.surrey.bc.ca>, is dedicated to information about services for new Canadians. Often details about these services are provided in both English and Punjabi or Chinese, and include citizenship information, translation services, job search programs and evaluation of foreign credentials.

Early childhood education for toddlers, preschoolers and their parents or caregivers is also well received at SPL. Punjabi and Chinese-speaking children's librarians provide storytimes in which the stories are read in English, with additional information on how to read to children and the library's programs and services spoken in the original language of the parents or caregivers. The adults are then given books from the collection to take home and read with their children.

Book collections in other languages are also a popular feature at SPL, and the Library collects items in both fiction and non-fiction for 15 different language groups, including Arabic, Chinese, Dutch, Farsi, German, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Urdu.

Each of SPL's nine branches has ESL (English as a Second Language) or ELT (English Language Training) materials such as TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) or IELTS (International English Language Testing System). Books on grammar, vocabulary, dictionaries, short novels and books on tape or CD are also available to help with pronunciation and audio kits for reading and listening comprehension. Dual language books, or books that are written in English plus one other language, are also available, as well as newspapers for English learners such as *Canadian Immigrant* and *Westcoast Reader*.

According to Basi, challenges of serving multicultural populations in a public library setting include difficulty in recruiting qualified staff who speak languages other than English and the cost of cataloguing materials in other languages (especially those with non-Romanized scripts). Limited funds and limited staff time are also factors in the provision of service to multicultural groups.

As a result, Surrey Public Library concentrates, in terms of programming and outreach, primarily on the two largest groups in the area – South Asians who speak Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu, and Chinese immigrants who speak Mandarin, Cantonese, and Taiwanese. Other groups are served through collections of books in other languages and other information (such as library brochures and citizenship information).

Outside of the library, the greatest challenge for library staff lies in keeping informed about any new groups of people who are settling in Surrey, particularly refugees whose basic needs when moving to Canada are somewhat different from those of other new immigrants. Basi notes that refugees are more interested in life-skills and settlement information, rather than reading books in their own language for pleasure:

"According to the experts [I] have met who work with refugees, libraries can only do so much...the needs of refugees are first better met through service agencies, counsellors, social workers etc. Money, transportation, language skills are even greater issues for them than for other immigrants. Refugees usually don't have a family already here for support and advice. Staff at SPL work with other agencies and ask them how, when, and if the library can become of their lives."

Surrey's diversity will continue to be a major factor in the coming years, and the SPL Strategic Plan 2008-2010 states that the library system will continue to enhance library experiences for ethnically diverse customers with its collections, programs and inviting public spaces.

To find out more about Surrey Public Library and its multicultural services, contact librarian Ravi Basi at rkbas@spl.surrey.ca.

2. Calgary Public Library

The city of Calgary is the largest city in the province of Alberta with a population of just over one million, and is located approximately 80 kilometres east of the front ranges of the Canadian Rockies.

Calgary Public Library (CPL) has a system of 17 branches across the city, with library administration working to secure funding for four new branches in the next ten years. 13.5 million items are circulated each year, while facilities and services were accessed 32 million times by Calgarians.

Calgary is becoming increasingly diverse, with the 2006 Canada Census reporting 252,770 foreign-born residents in the city, or roughly 25 % of the population. Calgary had the fourth highest rate of new immigrants in its total population, after Toronto, Vancouver and Windsor, Ontario. The top ten countries of origin for immigrants to Calgary are China, the Philippines, India, Great Britain, USA, Colombia, Russia, Korea and Nigeria.

Given this trend, a focus of CPL's business plan became increasing community connections and meeting the special needs of diverse populations. Library staff had observed that immigrant families were often hesitant to use libraries – due to a lack of familiarity with libraries as public institutions or concerned about the language demands of regular library programs. To provide a comfortable experience for these customers, CPL decided initially to offer a specially designed ESL family storytime, as this format could include a variety of family members, both adults and children.

This initiative included a staff training component and a package of storytime plans developed with the particular needs of ESL families in mind. The ESL storytime plans were designed to be thematic, in order to reinforce the vocabulary and concepts introduced in each program. Themes start with the most basic experiences of the ESL toddler and preschooler, incorporating such topics as eating, getting dressed and a child's typical experiences in the community.

The format of ESL storytimes follows CPL's standard format for family storytimes: a half hour of songs, stories and stretches for children ages 2 to 5, accompanied by a parent or caregiver. This format was chosen to enable families to come to storytime together, giving young participants a greater feeling of comfort and confidence, while providing staff with the opportunity to promote the library and educate parents about the importance of reading.

For adults, the Diversity Services Department was opened at the Central Library in 2005. The renovated 5th floor is a physical space and a service unit that integrates service delivery across the Library's 17 locations and is meant to foster social exchange and connections across generations and cultural groups.

As part of Diversity Services, CPL is able to offer a Language Learning Lab service is also located on the fifth floor. This lab is equipped with computer stations featuring ESL software, audio listening stations and a video/DVD station to provide customers who wish to practice English as a Second Language skills, or those who aspire to learn another language, with a place for independent practice.

Heather Glennie, Manager of the Diversity Services Department, notes that many of the Library's programs and services for new Canadians are founded on providing equitable access to the tools of literacy and lifelong learning. "Calgary Public Library is able to provide staff assistance in over 42 languages to customers who do not speak English. In addition, a new telephone translation service enables customers to engage in a three-way conversation with staff and a translation service of over 120 languages to increase access to library resources and services."

CPL also offers books, magazines, and newspapers in 35 languages for both children and adults. The collections includes DVDs in Chinese, Hindi/Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese, international music on CD, and a number of career, job search, and Canadian citizenship pre-

paration resources. In addition, each library location has a Literacy / ESL (English as a Second Language) collection of books, cassettes, CDs, videos and DVDs, and TOEFL and TOEIC preparation material which support the efforts of adults to increase their English literacy skills.

Welcome to Your Calgary Public Library, a brochure containing all the basic information about the Library and its resources is available in fourteen languages including: Arabic, Chinese (Traditional and Simplified), Farsi, French, Korean, Hindi, Japanese, Pilipino (Tagalog), Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Urdu. These brochures are now also available on the Library web-site in PDF format (<<http://calgarypubliclibrary.com/multi/welcome.htm>>) for increased access to Library information for new Canadians.

To enhance universal access of resources, the World Languages section of the CPL website has been updated with new features, including links to online and community resources for information on Canadian Citizenship and integration assistance and access to International newspapers, search engines, and ESL websites.

Tours, displays, presentations and participation in a wide range of community events ensure that the Library maintains close connections with new Canadians and their service providers. Since October 2005, the Library has held ESL Tours for over 2 462 learners, instructors and agency staff, showcasing Library services and resources to New Canadians.

Connecting with the community is also an important part of CPL's service to new Canadians. CPL's Community Outreach Van service delivers storytime programs, lends materials at offsite locations, and promotes Library services and programs at high profile events, including parades, cultural festivals, and trade shows. The Community Services Van and system staff have worked together to reach growing numbers of new users.

According to Glennie, access to technology can be important to success for immigrants. "All CPL public computers have multilanguage capabilities installed to enable customers to read and type documents and e-mails in many languages, as well as view and read websites created in many languages. Free computer classes are provided at all locations for people with little or no computer experience. Instruction on how to use computers, how to work with Microsoft Office products and how to successfully navigate the Internet are also offered in world languages such as Punjabi, Cantonese, Spanish and Vietnamese. These programs enhance new Canadians' ability to participate in community life and encourage participants with limited English skills to learn computer technology skills in a comfortable and welcoming environment."

A variety of programming is also available to new Canadians at CPL, including the popular *ESL Conversation Club*, where participants can practice English speaking and listening skills in a group setting. *Drop-in Career Coaching* helps customers in a one-on-one environment with job searching skills and career information. The *New Friends Program*, created in partnership with the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association, is specifically targeted to immigrant women who may feel isolated, providing interaction with other women as well as discussions on topics of interest. A literacy program called *Reading Advantage* offers one-on-one coaching, by library volunteers, for adults who wish to improve their reading skills.

Like Ravi Basi at Surrey Public Library, Heather Glennie notes that one of the challenges of serving multicultural groups in a public library setting is maintaining awareness of new cultural groups arriving in Calgary. Diversity Services uses information from the Canadian Census, but "these documents are only published every five years or so." A further challenge is created by the constantly increasing demand for ESL materials and multicultural services, as greater numbers of immigrants continue to come to Calgary. Nevertheless, multicultural services will continue to be a priority for the CPL system, as "the library serves a key role in enabling new Canadians to obtain much-needed knowledge, information and skills. In supporting them, we enhance their ability to enjoy a full and satisfying life in Calgary."

For further information about Calgary Public Library's services and programs for multicultural groups, Heather Glennie can be contacted at heather.glennie@calgary-publiclibrary.com.

3. Brampton Public Library

Brampton is a southeastern city located in the province of Ontario and west of Toronto. It is a rapidly growing community, with a 33 % increase in population from 2001-2006, and is expected to reach 600,000 by 2018.

The largest immigrant population in Brampton is South Asian, with Punjabi speakers accounting for the largest percentage of this group. The 2006 Canadian census showed that 68,240 individuals, or 15.8 % of the population, reported Punjabi as their mother tongue. Portuguese, Urdu and Italian are also language groups of note in this area, with each group representing roughly 2 % of the total population.

The 2006 Census also reported that the language composition of Brampton has increased, with 69 languages spoken compared to the 60 languages reported in 2001 – further indicating Brampton's status as an increasingly multilingual city.

The Brampton Library provides servicing to the community through four distinct branches that house a collection of more than 600,000 items with an annual circulation of 2.8 million. The rapid growth of the city had led to a reduction of service levels and a difficulty in meeting growing and differing demands of its population. However, the Brampton Public Library's 2006-2008 Strategic Plan determined to reinvigorate service to its public, including multicultural groups.

Sarala Uttangi, Multicultural Services Coordinator at Brampton Public Library, works closely with agencies that serve or are run by cultural communities, in order to create success in multicultural programming at the library.

She observes that "it is necessary to ensure that library services meet the specific needs of each community. "We partner with community-based organizations and agencies that serve the immigrant communities to provide programs. At each program, we promote the Library and tell participants about the types of resources that are available for them. We also display books on the subject matter so that they can borrow. When I collaborate with an outside agency, I let them know what needs to be covered. I also insist that they bring a specialist if possible."

Programs for adults at Brampton Public Library cover a wide variety of topics. *Managing Your Money for New-*

comers helps participants learn about their own spending habits and how to manage savings, debt reduction and budgeting in their new country. *Evaluation of Foreign Credentials* involves a guest speaker from World Education Services who provides information on how participants can have their educational credentials evaluated for job searches, higher education, and apprenticeship training. *Canadian Workplace Culture for Newcomers* helps participants learn about the cultural differences, greetings, punctuality, body language, teamwork and relationships in the Canadian workplace while *Parenting in a New Country* covers a range of parenting issues dealing with the development of children and teens as well as offering cultural insight to parenting in Canada.

The Library also purchases a variety of books, magazines, audio tapes, CDs, videos, and DVDs for adults in languages that are present in the community, including Hindi, Punjabi, Portuguese, Chinese, Spanish, Polish and Arabic.

For children, Brampton has created an *Around the World Storytime*, which has been created to include both young immigrants and their Canadian counterparts. For those who do not speak English, the program is meant to help strengthen English language skills as well as introducing participants to Canadian culture. Canadian participants are meant to achieve a greater awareness and understanding of other cultures. Multicultural themes are incorporated whenever possible, including celebrations of events such as Chinese New Year, Ramadan, Diwali and Hanukkah.

The Library also offers a multilingual booklet entitled *Raise a Reader*, which targets children from birth to five years. The booklet contains stories, songs and rhymes in English and one of seven other languages, including Arabic, Chinese, French, Hindi, Polish, Spanish and Punjabi. Useful tips for reading with children and recommended books and recordings for various ages are included, and can be found online at http://www.bramlib.on.ca/childrens/childrens_services.htm.

The library also maintains a collection of dual language picture books, which are designed to help develop children's literacy skills and promote continued use of home languages. These books provide text in both English and another language.

Contact Sarala Uttangi at suttangi@bramlib.on.ca for additional information on the multicultural programs and services offered by Brampton Public Library.

4. Windsor Public Library

Windsor is the southernmost city in Canada and lies at the western end of the heavily populated Quebec City-Windsor Corridor. Windsor is located directly south of Detroit, separated from this American city by the Detroit River. Windsor attracts many immigrants from around the world. Over 20 % of its residents are foreign-born – the fourth highest proportion for a Canadian city.

As a result, WPL offers print and audio-visual materials in 25 international languages. Additionally, Windsor Public Library has a rich collection of English as a Second Language (ESL) materials, which include dictionaries, dual-language dictionaries, two-language travel kits, and language learning audio resources for your language needs. Also available are two-language (for example, English-

Chinese) children's books in the following languages – Albanian, Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Punjabi, Somali, Spanish and Vietnamese.

Another resource available at Windsor Public Library are than 20 international language magazines and a selection of foreign language newspapers, printed in languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Croatian, Russian, French, Polish, Spanish and Romanian, which are available daily for customers.

Daniel Mungai, Languages Librarian at WPL, co-ordinates the weekly English Conversation Circle program, which attracts 100 participants per month, and is facilitated by volunteers in the community who have English as their first language.

WPL is a member of the South Ontario Multilanguage Pool, which allows libraries to share language audio and print materials on a six-month rotational basis. This arrangement allows all parties involved to make the best use of limited funding and give their customers a variety of materials from which to choose.

Mungai notes that one of the biggest challenges WPL faces in providing services to multicultural groups is having enough materials to help customers learn English. "We often don't have enough TOEFL materials on the shelf, due to high demand. We fortunately now have a database called LearningExpress which is alleviating this need." This database contains a collection of practice tests and tutorial course series designed to help students and adult learners practice tests they need to take, such as the TOEFL exam.

Another challenge arose in trying to help customers who arrive at the library with no English language skills. To address this concern, WPL has enlisted City of Windsor employees to help with translation in the process of providing library services. A link to <www.settlement.org> on the WPL website, located at <www.windsorpubliclibrary.com>, also offers library information videos online in a variety of languages.

Conversely, Mungai notes that one of the most satisfying aspects of offering multicultural services in a public library setting is receiving calls or emails from newcomers who say that the ESL services at WPL were of great use to them and they are now employed or enrolled in university.

Daniel Mungai can be contacted at <DMungai@windsorpubliclibrary.com> for information about multicultural services at Windsor Public Library.

5. Toronto Public Library

Toronto is the largest city in Canada and the capital of the province of Ontario. With over 2.5 million residents, it is the fifth-most populous municipality in North America.

Toronto Public Library (TPL) is the largest public library system in Canada, with 99 branches and 11 million items to borrow or use in the library. Toronto Public Library is also the second busiest system in the world, second only to Hong Kong, with 11.5 million registered borrowers.

The population that TPL serves represents one of the most diverse in the world. According to the Canadian Census for 2006, 50 % of those currently living in Toronto were born in another country. More than 150 languages and dialects are spoken in the Toronto area, and the

average number of immigrants arriving in the city each year is 55,000.

Successful services for newcomers at TPL begin with a commitment at the planning level. According to *Urban Stories: The Next Chapter: Strategic Plan for 2004-2007*, one of TPL's primary goals was to continue to contribute to the successful adaptation of immigrants to Toronto. An ambitious action plan was developed, and included:

- Expanded access to settlement information to meet the needs of newcomers, increased access, in print and electronic format, to services and programs in languages other than English;
- improved access to Canadian accreditation information, career planning and other job-related materials, promotion of volunteer opportunities at the Library to help newcomers gain Canadian experience;
- offering cultural programs that celebrate and promote the diversity of Toronto, introduction of the library and its services to immigrant and newcomer communities through enhanced outreach programs and promotional activities;
- expanded access to electronic information resources that are of interest to the city's diverse population;
- encouraging the use of library computers and the Internet through public training programs;
- developing comprehensive staff training and development programs that help staff better serve immigrant and newcomer communities.

Currently, TPL works with the federal government and various community agencies to offer programs that assist newcomers with the various aspects of settlement in Canada. Information is provided, in group settings and online, about living in Toronto, connecting with other immigrant groups in the city, health services, translation and interpretation services, and job searching. This service is currently offered year-round in seven branches and will expand to include twelve additional branches in 2008.

English Conversation Circles are weekly group meetings that give adult newcomers the chance to practice English, meet new friends, discover library services and learn about their new environment. Programs run in 10-week cycles, for two hours per session, at twelve TPL branches.

TPL keeps extensive collections of books and other tools for studying English as a Second Language (ESL). Many of the 99 branches across the city offer ESL materials for people who want to learn English, or improve their speaking, reading, writing and understanding of the language. There's also a major ESL collection at the Toronto Reference Library's Languages Centre, located in downtown Toronto. In selected libraries, children or their parents and teachers can find dictionaries, readers, vocabulary building books, bilingual books and audio kits (books with audiocassettes.)

Other special multicultural services for children at TPL include Dial-a-Story, a telephone storytelling service in which callers can listen to stories available over the phone in ten languages (English, French, Cantonese, Mandarin, Italian, Somali, Spanish, Polish, Portuguese and Tamil). Some of the stories implemented in this service include: *How Raven Brought the Daylight: a Haida Tale*, *Ti Jean et les Muenier Sans Souci* (French: *Ti Jean and the Care-free Miller*), *Daoshi Zhong Li* (Cantonese: *The Monk Who Grew a Pear Tree*), *Tre Fratelli* (Italian: *Three Brothers*), *O Ganso de Ouro* (Portuguese: *The Golden Goose*) and

Neustra Senora de Guadalupe (Spanish: *Our Lady of Guadalupe*). 26,000 calls are received each month, which translates into 866 calls per day!

English Can Be Fun is a free six week English conversational program which is held twice a week during the summer to help young immigrant children, ages 7-13, develop language skills. Children practice their English skills through speaking, reading and other learning activities. Professional teachers are hired to conduct this program. More than 600 children registered in the 2007 summer season at 36 of TPL's branches.

Two of the most popular annual events are the system-wide celebrations of Black History Month (February) and Asian History Month (May) which include a wide range of cultural programming. Well-known community members of the cultural group contribute author/poet readings, storytelling, and other performances to these events. In addition to system wide centrally arranged programs, local branches participate by making arrangements for their own local programs. These could include crafts, concerts, musical performances or author readings.

Multicultural Services Librarian Joan McCatty notes that one of the challenges in offering multicultural services at TPL lies in "finding information about ethnocultural communities. Information is often not readily available. It has to be sought, gathered and analyzed, and this can be time consuming."

"Timeliness of the information is another challenge. Because of the lag time in census results, service planning can be more often reactive than proactive."

Contact Joan McCatty at jmccatty@torontopubliclibrary.ca for further information about Toronto Public Library and its programs and services.

6. Halifax Public Library

The city of Halifax, Nova Scotia's capital and largest city, is located on the Nova Scotia peninsula on Canada's south-eastern coast, surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean.

The Halifax Public Libraries system comprises 14 branch libraries, serving a population of 359,183. The collection consists of more than 1,164,578 items – including books, magazines, videos, compact discs and cassettes. As part of the Nova Scotia Regional Library System, Halifax Public Libraries strongly supports other public libraries, lending in the vicinity of 5,000 items per year to other libraries including those in a government or university setting.

Multicultural services at HPL centres around the ESL for Adults program, a popular one-to-one and small group volunteer program where adults can improve their English communication skills with help from community volunteers. Programs take place at scheduled times in six dif-

ferent library branches. Tutors and learners usually meet once a week for two hours at one of the program locations and times. This program is most heavily used by Chinese, Arabic, Korean, Spanish and Russian speakers. Multicultural Services Librarian Tracey Jones observes that "the ESL for Adults program is not only an opportunity for language learning, but also for cultural exchange and understanding. Last year, more than 400 adults with more than 30 different first languages participated."

ESL for Adults Volunteer Tutor Orientation Kits have been created to assist volunteers who participate in HPL's ESL programs. A booklet has been designed to give new tutors information on how the programs work, as well as ideas, tips and activities for starting out as an ESL tutor. Each branch of HPL also has a section devoted to books, tapes and videos for adult ESL or literacy learners. Most of these materials are available to take home, although some high-use items are for reference use only. ESL program coordinators and library staff is available to show new Canadian customers the ESL/Literacy section in each branch and to assist these customers in their search for materials.

A particularly unique feature of the Nova Scotia population is a large African population, originating with the Loyalist migration from the United States during the American War of Independence in 1776 as well as immigrants who arrived following the War of 1812.

As a result, HPL celebrates African History month in February, working closely with community partners to offer targeted programming for this celebration, including cultural presentations, author readings and forums on issues of interest. 2009 will mark the 25th anniversary of African Heritage Month celebrations at Halifax Public Library. For additional information on multicultural services and programs at HPL, Tracey Jones can be contacted at jonest@halifaxpubliclibraries.ca.

By offering services that respond to the needs of their communities, as well as being proactive in the provision of services and programs to newcomers, these Canadian libraries are continuing to provide a welcoming presence to those who seek to make Canada their new home and a more inclusive future for all Canadians.

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